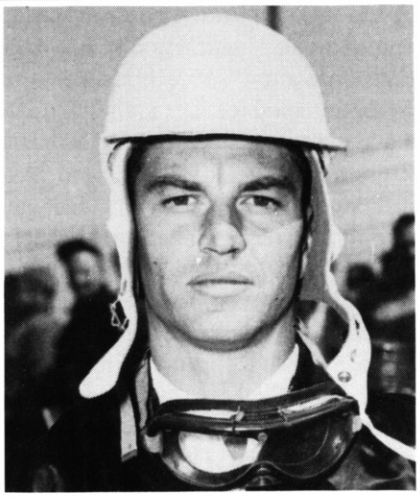
BOBBY GRIM

Robert Harold Grim was born on September 4, 1924, in Coal City, Indiana, the son of Harold and Thelma Grim. His father owned a Chevrolet dealership before getting into the coal mining business, thus Bobby learned to drive an automobile at age six. Shortly after high school graduation from Coal City High School, Bobby joined the Army. Upon returning from the war, he began his racing career at Jungle Park, near Rockville (Ind.) in August of 1946. The event, like those at Franklin, Scottsburg and Mitchell, was sanctioned by the Midwest Dirt Track Racing Association (MDTRA), which was known as 'the Kerosene Circuit'. Cliff Griffith was the 1946-47 MDTRA champion aboard Hector Honore's Hal-powered machine.



Bobby Grim
Bruce Craig Collection

In 1948, Cliff formed his own team and Bobby joined forces with the master mechanic Honore from Pana, Illinois, who had just acquired an Offenhauser motor. Bobby and Hector remained a team for eleven seasons in Central States Racing Association (CSRA) and International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) 'big car' competition. Bobby finished fifth in the IMCA season point championship in 1951. In each of the next three years, he gradually moved up in the rankings: 4th in 1952, 3rd in '53, 2nd in '54.

Bobby Grim at Danville (IL) Fair - 1948
(Photography by Bob Sheldon)

The ascension to the IMCA throne aboard Hector Honore's Bardahl-sponsored "Black Deuce" was completed in 1955 and repeated in 1956, 1957 and 1958. His feat of four straight championships is even more remarkable when one considers his competition those years: Marvin Pifer, Johnny Pouelsen, Herschel Wagner, Jud Larson, Emmett "Buzz" Barton, Don Carr, Arnie Knepper, Jim Hurtuhise and Jerry Blundy. Over the years, Bobby recorded an incredible 186 feature victories aboard the cageless sprinters. Honore once commented, "Bob Grim was a natural, a pure natural. In a lifetime, you don't find a handful of race drivers with that kind of natural ability."

In 1959, Bobby left the "Black Deuce" and graduated to the Indianapolis 500, where he became the fastest rookie ever and qualified in the middle of the second row. He was named the 1959 "Rookie of the Year" at Indianapolis. Bobby eventually went on to compete in eight more 500's. On September 10, 1960, Grim added the 100-mile Champ car race in Syracuse, New York to his growing list of career accomplishments.

Besides driving, Bobby Grim also served as an official on the 1959 United States Auto Club (USAC)-sponsored coast-to-coast economy run for the Simca Car Company. In 1964 and 1965, he served on the rules committee for USAC. Bobby, along with eight other Indy drivers, even doubled for Paul Newman and Robert Wagner in the 1968 movie "Winning".

Grim developed the turbo charger for Herb Porter and was the first to drive with one in the 1966 500-mile classic. It was also the only roadster that year and he was dubbed 'the King of the Roadsters'.

He also pursued midget racing starting in 1959 with owner Coxie Bowman and campaigned them into 1971, with his last race at Fort Wayne, Indiana. Bobby's overall career feature win mark stands at 199 victories, an impressive achievement indeed.

Bobby continues to live in Indianapolis today with his wife Betty, the former Mrs. Frankie Lueptow. Betty's daughter Suzie Hodges (the former Mrs. Sheldon Kinser) also resides in nearby Danville, with sprint car racer/husband Rocky. Bobby also has a son Bobby Grim, Jr., a former midget competitor, from a previous marriage.